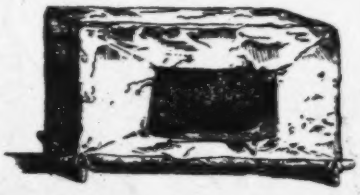
6: Wied-Neuwied T-5 (1832-1834) 1843 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

342 height, are long rafters, inclining to the centre; they are placed near each other, and bear the roof. On the outside the huts are covered with a kind of mat, made of osiers, joined together with bark, and now the skeleton of the hut is finished. Over this hay is spread, and the outer covering 462 is of earth. The men and women work together in erecting these huts, and the relations, neighbours, and friends, assist them in the work. The building of the huts, manufacturing of their arms, hunting, and wars, and part of the labours of the harvest, are the occupations of the men; every other kind of work is left to the women, who, though in general well treated, are obliged to perform all the really laborious work. The women fetch fuel, in heavy loads, frequently from great distances, carry water, and, in winter, blocks of ice into the huts, cook, tan the skins, make 354 all the clothing, lay out the plantations, perform field labour, &c. &c. In the centre of the hut a circular place is dug for the fire, over which the kettle is suspended. This fire-place, or hearth, is often enclosed with a ledge of stones. The fuel is laid, in moderately thick pieces, on the external edge of the hearth, crossing each other in the middle, when it is kindled, and the pieces 352 gradually pushed in as they burn away. The Indians are not fond of large fires. The inmates sit round it, on low seats, made of peeled osiers, covered with buffalo or bear skin. Round the inner circumference of the hut lie or hang the baggage, the furniture, and other property, in leather bags, the painted parchment travelling bags, and the harness of the horses; and on separate stages there are arms, sledges, and snow-shoes, while meat and maize, piled up, complete the motley assemblage. (See Mr. Bodmer's drawing of the interior of the hut of Dipauch, Plate XIX.) The beds stand against the wall of the hut; they consist of a large square case, made of parchment or skins, with a square entrance, and are large enough to hold several persons, who lie very conveniently and warm on skins and blankets. (See the woodcut.)



342 In the winter huts they place, at the inside of the door, a high screen of willow boughs, 221 covered with hides, which keeps off the draught of air from without, and especially protects the 171 fire.

The summer huts are very cool, and, generally speaking, have no unpleasant smell. Mr. Say gives a very good description, and a tolerably accurate print, of a Konza lodge, or hut, and, with

7: Catlin R, E-5 (1832-1840) 1857
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

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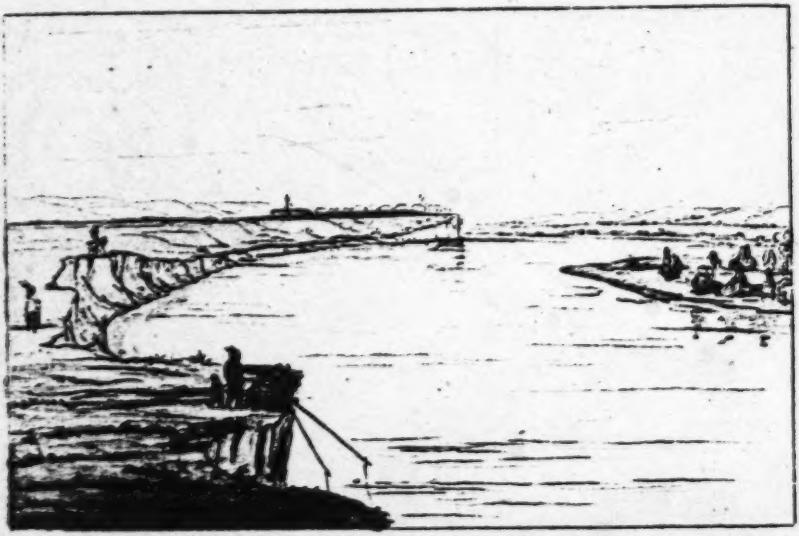

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46

[facing p. 80]

7: Catlin R, E-5 (1832-1840) 1857
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

361 342 the lodge. These floors or foundations are all perfectly circular, and varying in size in proportion to the number of inmates, or of the quality or standing of the families which are to occupy them. The superstructure is then produced, by arranging, inside of this circular excavation, firmly fixed in the ground and resting against the bank, a barrier or wall of timbers, some eight or nine inches in diameter, of equal height (about six feet) placed on end, and resting against each other, supported by a formidable embankment of earth raised against them outside; then, resting upon the tops of these timbers or piles, are others of equal size and equal in numbers, of twenty or twenty-five feet in length, resting firmly against each other, and sending their upper or smaller ends towards the centre and top of the lodge; rising at an angle of forty-five degrees to the apex or sky-light, which is about three or four feet in diameter, answering as a chimney and a sky-light at the same time. The roof of the lodge being thus formed, is supported by beams passing around the inner part of the lodge about the middle of these poles or timbers, and themselves upheld by four or five large posts passing down to the floor of the lodge. On the top of, and over the poles forming the roof, is placed a complete mat of willow-boughs, of half a foot or more in thickness, which protects the timbers from the dampness of the earth, with which the lodge is covered from bottom to top, to the depth of two or three feet; and then with a hard or tough clay, which is impervious to water, and which with long use becomes quite hard, and a lounging place for the whole family in pleasant weather—for sage— for wooing lovers—for dogs and all; an airing place—a look-out—a place for gossip and mirth—a seat for the solitary gaze and meditations of the stern warrior, who sits and contemplates the peaceful mirth and happiness that is breathed beneath him, fruits of his hard-fought battles, on fields of desperate combat with bristling Red Men.

342 353 The floors of these dwellings are of earth, but so hardened by use, and swept so clean, and tracked by bare and moccassined feet, that they have almost a polish, and would scarcely soil the whitest linen. In the centre, and immediately under the sky-light (PLATE 46) is the fire-place—a hole of four or five feet in diameter, of a circular form, sunk a foot or more below the surface, and curbed around with stone. Over the fire-place, and suspended from the apex of diverging props or poles, is generally seen the pot or kettle, filled with buffalo meat; and around it are the family, reclining in all the most picturesque attitudes and groups, resting on their buffalo-robes and beautiful mats of rushes. These cabins are so spacious, that they hold from twenty to forty persons—a family and all their connexions. They all sleep on bedsteads similar in form to ours, but generally not quite so high; made of round poles rudely lashed together with thongs. A buffalo skin, fresh stripped from the animal, is stretched across the bottom poles, and about two feet from the floor; which, when it dries, becomes much contracted, and forms a perfect sacking-bottom. The fur side of this skin is placed uppermost, on which they lie with great comfort, with a buffalo-robe

[354] [352] 352

10: Neill H-4(no date) 1884 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

OPEN SPACE IN VILLAGE.

But I observe, always, that nearly about the centre of each village is a large open space of about four acres in circumference, round which the huts are built very regularly, and at equal distances from each other, the doors fronting the open space. This circle might consist of thirty huts, and I make no manner of doubt were the first that were erected on the spot. 361

VILLAGE EXPANSION.

Others of their friends joined them afterwards, for various causes and built in the rear and erected their huts as they found it convenient, and as this continues to be the case, there are huts continually demolishing in one village, and others building in another. This often proceeds from misunderstandings they have had with either of the chiefs of the village, or their own neighbors, when finding their situation unpleasant and probably subject to frequent quarrels, they shift their quarters, but always take up their own residence among their own tribe. 361 621 578

The Mandans and Saulteurs are a stationary people, and never abandon their villages further than to go out hunting or on a war party. They are much more given to agriculture than the Big Bellies, and raise an immense quantity of corn, beans, squashes, tobacco, and some flowers. 361 241

A MANDAN HUT.

A Mandan hut is large and spacious, of a circular form. I measured the one I lodged in, and found it ninety feet from the door to the opposite side, forming a circumference on the inside of many paces. The whole space is dug out about one and a half feet below the surface of the earth. In the center is the fire place, which is a square space of about five feet, dug out two feet below the surface. The lower part of the hut is constructed by erecting strong posts about six feet out of the ground, at equal distances, upon these are laid logs of the same size, and reach from post to post, and form the circle. On the outer side are erected pieces of split wood of seven feet in length, in a slanting manner, the one end resting on the ground, the other leaning against the crown log or beam. Upon this beam again, are placed rafters about the size of a man's leg, and from twelve to fifteen feet long, in a slanting position, sufficient to drain off the rain; they are laid so close as to touch. The upper end is supported upon very stout pieces of square timber, which last are also supported by four very thick posts, about five feet circumference, and fifteen feet out of the ground, and fifteen feet asunder, forming nearly a square. Over these pieces of square timber, others again of equal size are laid crossing them at right 342 [354]

10: Neill H-1 (no date) 1884 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

342 [351] angles, leaving open only a square space of about four feet on each side. This serves for chimney and windows, as they have no other opening to admit of light; and when it rains, even this is covered over with a canoe to prevent the rain from impairing their earthen pots. The whole of the roof is then well thatched with willows, to the thickness of six inches or more. Over the whole is laid about one foot of earth, and round the base to the height of three or four feet, and the thickness of three feet, which answers for security in case of an attack by the enemy, and keeps out the cold. The door is five feet broad and six high, provided with a covered way or porch on the outside, of the same height as the door, about seven feet broad and ten feet in length.

342 352 The doors are made of raw buffalo hide stretched upon a frame and suspended by cords from the beam, which forms the circle. Every night the door is barricaded with a long piece of timber supported by two stout posts down in the ground, inside of the hut, one on each side of the door. As you enter the hut after passing through the porch and door, the first thing that strikes the view is a kind of triangular apartment on the left hand side of the door, and fronting the fire. This is for the purpose of fire-wood in the winter. This partition is constructed of square planks, about twelve feet high, and caulked to keep off the air from the door. Between the partition and the fire, there is commonly a distance of about five feet, which the master of the hut occupies during the day time, seated on a mat, constructed of small willows.* * * * These mats are about ten feet long and four broad. The two ends for about two and a half feet are raised from the ground in a slanting position and each supported by a kind of sofa; over the mat is spread buffalo skins.

352 511 Some of these couches are raised about a foot above the ground. Seated upon this a Mandan sits all day long and receives his friends, smokes and chats the time away, with the greatest dignity. He sometimes passes the night there also, when not inclined to lay with his wives.

INSIDE ARRANGEMENT OF HUTS.

352 513 On the left side of the host begins their range of beds. The master and his favorite wife always occupy the first, and his other wives each a separate one in succession, next to those of the young people. All are constructed in the same manner, and joining to each other lengthways.

MEDICINE STAGE,

353 At the bottom of the hut fronting the Masters' seat, stands his medicine stage, and indeed it may be called his whole riches

* [See Category 116, p. 334-10. A.]